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Where does a victim-offender dialogue take place?

If the offender is in prison or a locked community treatment program, the dialogue must occur there.

If the offender is on probation or parole, the victim-offender dialogue might take place at a probation and parole office.

However, the needs of the victim are first, so the dialogue may take place in the victim's community – at a public library or church perhaps.

What if I change my mind?

Any of the parties may decide at any time to discontinue the victim-offender dialogue process.

Offenders rarely discontinue the process once they have agreed to participate. Victims sometimes process their feelings during the preparation phase and discover that they do not need to go forward with the dialogue.

To request a Victim-Offender Dialogue with an offender, contact:
Victim Programs Manager
Montana Department of Corrections
Phone: (406) 444-7461 or toll-free (888) 223-6332

E-mail: shilander@mt.gov

WHERE IS YOUR OFFENDER?

Register for our free, confidential, automated VINE service to track the current location and custody status of your offender.

If your offender is under Montana Department of Corrections supervision, VINE (Victim Information & Notification Everyday) will contact you by telephone, email or text message with custody status updates, such as facility transfers, release into the community, or sentence expiration. VINE will notify you of upcoming parole and sentence review hearings, and tell you if the offender dies in custody or escapes.

Call VINE toll-free at (800) 456-3076 or register online at www.vinelink.com. You may also download a free mobile app for your iPod or smart phone at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/vinemobile/id625472495?mt=8> or <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.appriss.vinemobile>.



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Victim-Offender Dialogue



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The Department of Corrections... Helping Victims Heal

What is Victim-Offender Dialogue (VOD)?

The Montana Department of Corrections (MDOC) assists adult victims who wish to meet face-to-face with their offenders under the guidance of trained facilitators. The dialogue focuses on the harm to the victim and the offender's responsibility. Only the victim can initiate a victim-offender dialogue.

Why would a victim want to meet with the offender?

Victims often have questions only the perpetrators (offenders) can answer. What happened before and during the crime? Was my loved one in pain? Why did you fire your gun when you knew there were innocent bystanders? What did you do with our property you stole?

Victims may want to tell the offender how their lives have been affected by the crime and how they feel about what happened.

Victims often want to see for themselves what kind of person the offender has become, and whether he or she is sorry.

Most victims who participate in dialogues with their offenders find that the process moves them forward in their healing journeys.

Why would an offender agree to participate in a dialogue?

Many offenders are sincerely remorseful for their crimes and want an opportunity to apologize to their victims.

Answering the victim's questions and providing information about the crime is one way offenders can demonstrate personal accountability and attempt to make amends.

Who can participate in a victim-offender dialogue?

Victims of adult felony offenders under MDOC supervision may request to participate in a dialogue by calling the victim programs manager at (888) 223-6332. A victim can also ask a family member, counselor, victim advocate or other trusted person to make the initial phone call.

Offenders are not allowed to initiate a victim offender dialogue. An offender may decline the request to participate but most accept. Offenders receive no tangible benefits, such as early parole consideration, for participating.

How does victim-offender dialogue work?

Once a victim requests a victim-offender dialogue and the offender agrees, preparation begins. The victim programs manager consults with the offender's case manager and treatment staff to determine if a dialogue is appropriate and unlikely to cause the victim more harm.

Next, a volunteer facilitator, or sometimes two facilitators, meet several times separately with the victim and offender. Preparation takes months because facilitators sometimes travel long distances to meet with the parties.

How do I know if a victim-offender Dialogue is for me?

The victim programs manager and facilitators can help. MDOC usually does not allow dialogues in domestic violence or stalking cases due to the risk that the offender would intimidate the victim.

Parents or legal guardians may participate in a victim-offender dialogue on behalf of child victims.

The victim programs manager may decide that a dialogue is not appropriate due to risk of physical or emotional harm to anyone involved.

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